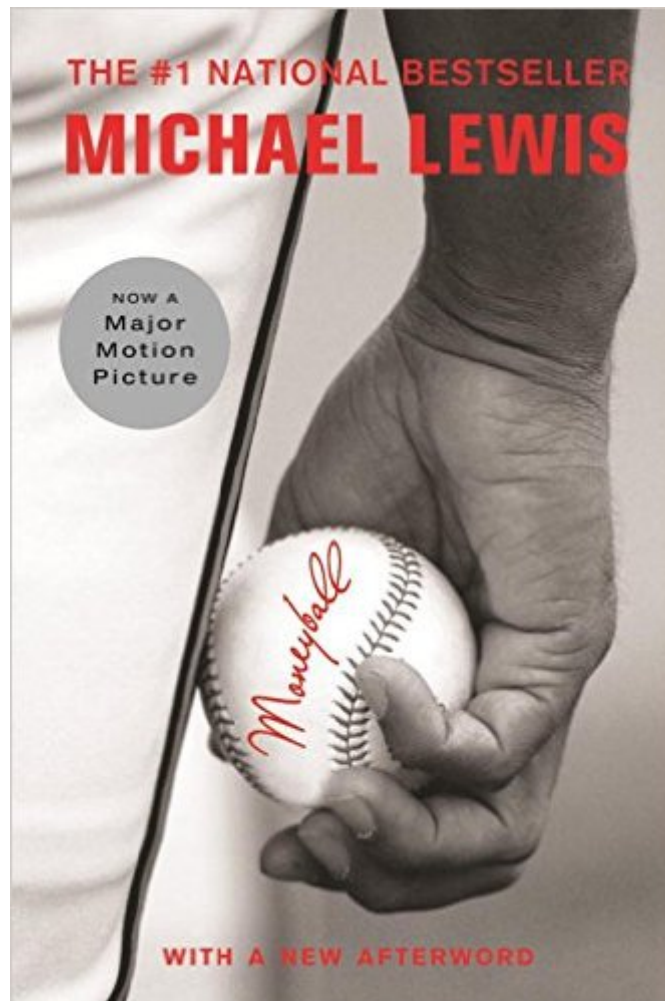


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Moneyball: The Art Of Winning An Unfair Game



Synopsis

Moneyball is a quest for the secret of success in baseball. Following the low-budget Oakland Athletics, their larger-than-life general manager, Billy Beane, and the strange brotherhood of amateur baseball enthusiasts, Michael Lewis has written not only "the single most influential baseball book ever" (Rob Neyer, Slate) but also what "may be the best book ever written on business" (Weekly Standard). "I wrote this book because I fell in love with a story. The story concerned a small group of undervalued professional baseball players and executives, many of whom had been rejected as unfit for the big leagues, who had turned themselves into one of the most successful franchises in Major League Baseball. But the idea for the book came well before I had good reason to write itâ "before I had a story to fall in love with. It began, really, with an innocent question: how did one of the poorest teams in baseball, the Oakland Athletics, win so many games?" With these words Michael Lewis launches us into the funniest, smartest, and most contrarian book since, well, since Liar's Poker. Moneyball is a quest for something as elusive as the Holy Grail, something that money apparently can't buy: the secret of success in baseball. The logical places to look would be the front offices of major league teams, and the dugouts, perhaps even in the minds of the players themselves. Lewis mines all these possibilitiesâ "his intimate and original portraits of big league ballplayers are alone worth the price of admissionâ "but the real jackpot is a cache of numbersâ "numbers!â "collected over the years by a strange brotherhood of amateur baseball enthusiasts: software engineers, statisticians, Wall Street analysts, lawyers and physics professors. What these geek numbers showâ "no, proveâ "is that the traditional yardsticks of success for players and teams are fatally flawed. Even the box score misleads us by ignoring the crucial importance of the humble base-on-balls. This information has been around for years, and nobody inside Major League Baseball paid it any mind. And then came Billy Beane, General Manager of the Oakland Athletics. Billy paid attention to those numbers â "with the second lowest payroll in baseball at his disposal he had toâ "and this book records his astonishing experiment in finding and fielding a team that nobody else wanted. Moneyball is a roller coaster ride: before the 2002 season opens, Oakland must relinquish its three most prominent (and expensive) players, is written off by just about everyone, and then comes roaring back to challenge the American League record for consecutive wins. In a narrative full of fabulous characters and brilliant excursions into the unexpected, Michael Lewis shows us how and why the new baseball knowledge works. He also sets up a sly and hilarious morality tale: Big Money, like Goliath, is always supposed to win...how can we not cheer for David?"One of the best baseballâ "and managementâ "books out....Deserves a place in the Baseball Hall of Fame."â "Forbes

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Lewis, who previously wrote some of the best books on Wall Street's go-go '80s (*Liar's Poker*) and Silicon Valley's go-go '90s (*The New New Thing*), here turns his attention to professional baseball. Now, I should preface this by saying that I used to love baseball and these days it doesn't interest me much at all. There was a time when I was a total stats geek, I bought all the Bill James abstracts, played tabletop games, etc., but a combination of playing in college and the escalating money completely turned me off to the game. I knew this was supposed to be a good book but had no intention of reading it until Nick Hornby's rave review in his column in *The Believer*. I figured if one of my favorite British novelists liked the book, there must be something to it. I picked it up and within ten pages I was totally hooked. The basis for the book is the question of how the Oakland A's, one of baseball's poorest teams as measured by payroll, managed to win so many games in the first few years of the new millennium. Lewis's potentially boring answer revolves around inefficiencies in the market for players, but he weaves this story around the A's General Manager, Billy Beane. Now, if you have some axe to grind with Beane, you might as well not read the book, 'cause Lewis tends to be rather fawning in many places. Still, Beane's own background and mediocre career form the perfect framework upon which to build this story about evaluating baseball talent. Beane was a hugely athletic, "can't miss" prospect, who turned down a joint football/baseball scholarship from Stanford to sign with the New York Mets out of high school. His pro career turned out to be utterly undistinguished, and this disconnect is what drove him to seek new methods of scouting and evaluating baseball talent.

For a former baseball player Billy Beane is a rare bird as a baseball GM. He used real baseball statistics, the kind the sabermetricians use to make great trade and bring a strong team back to Oakland. He had a great advantage over other GMs because he took advantage of their ignorance and tendencies to rely on the somewhat biased eyes of baseball scouts. What Michael Lewis did with this book was to show the world of baseball how Billy Beane did it and now I am sure that other GMs like Brian Cashman at New York and Theo Epstein in Boston are catching on. I don't know how much Steve Phillips put into action when he was the Mets GM. His lack of great success there indicates that he probably didn't follow it enough. But now as an ESPN commentator he definitely mentions it. This book is so good that the term moneyball now means the strategy that Billy Beane used. So the title of this book became a baseball term! This book is a must for managers, general managers and owners of professional baseball teams. It is also great for the fans and the fantasy baseball enthusiasts. Along with Mike Schell's books and the ones like "Curve Ball" written by Albert and Bennett this is one of the most thoughtful and scientific books on the game of baseball, how to win at it and how to build a successful team. The other books I mentioned were written by professional statisticians. It is the great success of the statistical science of sports, sabermetrics that we are now witnessing a scientific and statistical approach to baseball and other sports that had been lacking for many years.

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